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SIGHT AND SOUND

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SOME ARTICLES: FILMS AND YOUTH CLUBS
BENGAL STUDIO
AMERICAN RESEARCH
FILM SCORES
HENRY V

SOME CONTRIBUTORS: Herman G. Weinberg
David Welsh
Arthur Kleiner
Dorothy Grayson
Thomas Quinn Curtiss

6D.

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Sight and Sound

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Henry V

Reviewed by F. W. WILKINSON

Headmaster of the Latymer School

FOR MANY years to come the scholastic profession will be engaged in implementing the new Education Bill. The main aim will be to provide an adequate and suitable education for that sixty-odd per cent of the adolescent population which hitherto has been largely neglected after the age of fourteen.

This will mean considerable changes in our education system, especially in curriculum and teaching methods. But it can be said at the outset that there are two things assured of a more prominent place in future, the film as a medium of interpretation and Shakespeare, as the greatest creation in our language. Up till now these two have been most unhappy in combination, but Mr. Olivier's film opens a new prospect, rich in promise for the new schools and colleges as they begin to provide new audiences for the cinema. These, it is hoped, will be more enlightened, more experienced in things of value, more critical and harder to please, and, therefore, more worthy of the service of the creative artist.

Three Merits

That this *Henry V* is a masterpiece has already become a platitude amongst the critics. But the epithet is overwhelmingly deserved and moreover in three respects, as a film, as a production of a Shakespeare play and as a description of an historical epoch. It will please, as Shakespeare intended, both the quality and the groundlings. Its appeal will be indeed "a largess universal, like the sun".

To find myself saying this fills me somewhat with astonishment. I have always thought it impossible in theory, that any work of Shakespeare where the spoken word is everything, could

be adequately interpreted by a medium which must give priority to the visual image. But Mr. Olivier has convinced me that I was wrong. He is too well versed in Shakespeare to forfeit an old loyalty for the sake of novelty, to subordinate script to spectacle. He has succeeded because he has purposely refrained from using his camera to distract. It is used in good faith always to delineate the theme.

In fact he could argue, if challenged, that nowhere has he allowed the lines a worse chance of getting over than they would have had on the stage. Indeed he might maintain that the lines of Shakespeare have never been so directly communicated since the play left the intimacy of the Globe. As witness of this claim, Mr. Olivier could cite many scenes, all of which are impressive because the poetry, both of verse and prose, is impressively conveyed.

The Screen Wins

Some scenes were quite startling in their hitherto unrevealed effectiveness, like the disputation between the four captains, which most stage producers omit, deeming it too dull. And how infinitely more effective was the soliloquy on Ceremony, which was contrived simply by showing the face of the King in silent contemplation, while from the sound track came the quiet utterance of his thoughts.

On the stage the scene before Harfleur has always been an embarrassment, with the attendant soldiers waiting awkwardly for the King to hold his tongue. In this film the King's harangue seemed all too short and the serried ranks of soldiers as progressively revealed by the camera panning

back, served wholly to fortify the passion of the word. It was the same with the Crispin speech.

Another outstanding scene was the wooing of Katherine, which tends to be too static on the stage, so that the opportunity for matching word to action is restricted. Here Mr. Olivier has given us a charming period piece, a rhapsody of courtly wooing in an age of chivalry and flamboyant setting. At the end, such is the magic of the camera, the audience knows as much about Henry and Katherine as they do of one another.

Some critics have deplored the disunity created by presenting this play partly as a stage performance at the Globe and partly as a chronicler's fantasy.

It is quite obvious from the success of the later treatment that it could have contained the earlier scenes as well. At the same time one regretted leaving the Globe so soon. One was just getting to know the old place and to like the show, when one was whisked away.

Yet, at the end, back at the Globe once more, I for one was rid of all regrets.

Quality Justified

So to me this duality seems amply justified because it ensures both what Shakespeare conceived his play to be and also what it may signify to us to-day. Shakespeare is not for an age but for all time. He is also not for just the connoisseur but has gifts for the common man as well. But the problem with the common man and these young people is that they cannot understand the full sense of Shakespeare's lines without assistance, nor can they easily realise that Shakespeare's imagery springs directly from common life.

It was one of this film's most admirable qualities that it unobtrusively supplied this instruction whenever it was needed and the best

example of this will be found towards the end in the treatment of the Duke of Burgundy's description of the destructiveness of war.

Other critics have praised the battle scenes, especially the charge of the French knights on horseback. Here I am more disapproving, because, first of all, much that happens is historically inaccurate. That long charge, for instance, would have been quite impossible to men and horses loaded with armour as they were. Secondly, except from the music one never gets any sense of size or numbers, nor yet of weary hours of bloody effort, which that battle must have cost.

Since the film everywhere else copies closely the illuminated texts of the time with their stylised crowded canvas, it seems a pity suddenly to alter the prevailing conception and attempt a modern realism.

A Curious Omission

But this *Henry V* has such greatness that adverse criticism seems discourteous and the only further comment I have to make is regret that the King's kindly joke with Williams is omitted. The absence of this incident disturbs the balance of Henry's character and reduces the spiritual proportions of his "band of brothers".

There is now no space left except just to mention the magnificent performance of every member of the cast. Even the smallest parts are played by stars, a thing impossible in the theatre.

When I visited the Carlton there were crowds of young folk with their elders in tow. Many of my senior boys will have been amongst them, for it is their hobby to "collect" reputable performances of the classic playwrights. Then, when the film is generally released, will come the turn of the younger ones. They will all go, because it is a film. But, thanks to Mr. Olivier, they will also meet Shakespeare in all his glory.

Filmstrips in the Middle East

by DAVID WOOD

IN 1934 some disappointment was caused in the Cinema Section of the Egyptian Ministry of Education by the appearance of twenty-odd filmstrip projectors. It was felt that they were out of date. All Government Secondary Schools, both for boys and for girls, had been equipped since 1927 with 35-mm. cinema projectors of German make, while the boys' Primary Schools had been provided with smaller machines manufactured in France. There was a Film Library containing approximately 3,000 tins of film. All this material was under the control of a highly centralised Cinema Section which was arranging for the old cinema material to be replaced by the latest 16-mm. equipment.

Storm

At this moment a very senior Egyptian official decreed that a score of filmstrip projectors should be acquired. As I was at that time Director of the Cinema Section it was my duty to ensure that full use was obtained from these unwanted machines, which tended to be put on one side and forgotten by all members of the staff. "Movies" were considered much more entertaining. Moreover, two of my staff were Olympic weightlifting champions with numberless world's records to their credit, and I think the very fact that the filmstrip projectors were so compact and toy-like caused them to be heartily scorned. The less muscular colleagues of this duo considered still pictures of any type to be antiquated anyhow. Thus for one reason and another the filmstrip projectors were spurned. Even the schoolchildren regarded them as being no better than magic lanterns. The only persons who gave any sort of welcome to these little machines were poor pupils in distant provincial

schools who had never seen even a magic lantern.

Is it Retrogressive?

Ten years later a conference of Film Officers was held at the Cairo office of the Ministry of Information, Middle East Services. As I was then Assistant Public Information officer in charge of film propaganda in Palestine and Transjordan, I attended this conference. One of the highlights was to be a demonstration by a member of the U.S.A. Office of War Information. In the event, the machine to be demonstrated proved none other than my old friend despised of by Olympic weightlifters. It was admittedly an improved edition and delightfully compact. Ten-year-old memories of scorn, however, emphasised for me the retrogressive pressure of war. This machine had nothing new to offer. It was being recommended for negative virtues which would be of little importance in times of peace and plenty. It was smaller than a little typewriter. Material for twenty lectures could be carried in a cigarbox. The great, the tremendous, the overwhelming fact was, however, that filmstrip sufficient for an hour's showing could be measured almost in centimetres. On the other hand, cinema film sufficient for a performance of similar duration would total anything over 30,000 feet —reckoning negative, working-copy, waste, sound and release-print. The shortage of rawstock was becoming daily more acute and it was determined to utilise filmstrip projectors wherever possible. Another undoubted advantage was the ease with which any good photographer could compose his own lecture subjects. In Palestine filmstrips were being produced illustrating the story told by films which were in process of being made. For example,

if it had been decided to make a film to publicise the Utility Leather scheme being carried out by the local Control of Light Industries, then a whole series of stills would be taken at the tannery. These would later be sorted and arranged so as to tell the whole story. Suitable text would be written. Texts and enlargements of the stills selected would then be photographed, thus forming the complete filmstrip with the expenditure of a negligible quantity of rawstock. These filmstrips were then utilised to supplement the work done of the film itself. In this connection, I undertook to provide with Arabic and sub-titles a filmstrip belonging to the Office of War Information of the U.S.A. While engaged in this work I had opportunity to appreciate the terse, closeknit but crystal clarity of the text and the relevance of the images. These combined into one cogent whole which was very compelling in its effect. Thought expressed by filmstrip must be purged of any suspicion of irrelevance.

Limitations

A filmstrip projector was brought to Palestine for a special demonstration in the field, but in spite of every desire to be lenient its performance was unequal to the demands made upon it. This was due to the size of the audiences which gather to attend performances given by the mobile cinema units which the filmstrip projectors were intended to supplant. Two thousand and more persons will collect from neighbouring villages to see the show. The screen is set up in an open space and the men are accommodated between the projector and the screen. The women squat sequestered behind the screen, which is of course transparent and affords an equally good spectacle from the rear. All horizontal movement is, however, seen in reverse, and this gives rise to amused conjugal bickering on the way home. The

peasant woman who saw it through the screen will comment on how an aeroplane swooped on her from the West, while her worser half, who sat in front of the screen, swears by the beard of the prophet that it came from the East. So they go at it hammer and tongs arguing into the night as they trudge home. This custom of summoning the inhabitants of all villages within walking distance of a filmshow sometimes increases the size of the audiences to very unwieldy proportions. It was for this reason that our good friend the filmstrip projector failed out of doors.

Quick Cut Films

Indoors, however, where audiences are limited by the area of the rooms available, the filmstrip definitely comes into its own. The advantages of filmstrip over the "movies" is that films made in England are almost invariably cut at too great a pace for oriental mentality. Many of the audiences have never seen a film before. They are quite overcome by the rapidity with which the scenes succeed each other. They are left dizzy and dazzled; without comprehension of the lesson intended. Even in the Services instructional films are nowadays followed up by filmstrips as it is found that the speed of cinema films is too great to allow for full attention to detail. If this be the case with occidental audiences accustomed from childhood to the cinema, how much more necessary must it be with orientals who have never seen a film before? I have often regarded with a feeling of frustration enormous audiences gathered in some such outlandish spot as the ancient amphitheatre at Jerash, the desert near Beersheba or down by the Dead Sea. These untutored people had come in their thousands, anxious and eager to be impressed. Here was virgin soil, and all we had to offer was seed unsuited to that soil. Our spools were filled

with clever stuff, cut to take your breath away, in which not even a railway track could be represented as lying in a horizontal plane. Films more suited to the local audience had been attempted in Palestine, but of course these could only instruct concerning aspects of Palestine. Such subjects as the treatment of eye diseases, how to combat soil erosion, proved valuable. But films made in Palestine could bring no conception of England or the Empire, the United Nations or the war effort in general to people who have great need to be instructed in these things. Such films as can appeal to archaic villagers appear incredibly dull to occidental eyes. They drag interminably, repeat themselves with little variation and attempt only one lesson at a time. One has only to yawn through a couple of Egyptian feature films to grasp the kind of treatment that would be suitable.

Filmstrips are more in keeping with the general tempo of the local intelligence than are the films produced at home for Middle East consumption. A frame is introduced by a text. Few

can decipher this, it is true, but the commentator reads it aloud adding some apposite remark on his own account in order to connect it with the particular village he is visiting. Conjecture and comment fulfil their leisurely course and when the moment is ripe, presto, there is a picture for scrutiny. This remains immovable on the screen until full value has been extracted from it, after which the succeeding text is placed before the village minds. These work at a pace comparable to that of an ass and a camel yoked to one of their wooden ploughs.

While the filmstrip has been revived owing to the scarcity of rawstock and chemicals, yet it appears to have intrinsic value for work in the Middle East—that is until the technique of producing films comprehensible to backward villagers has been mastered. In the meantime the advantages of the filmstrip projector can only be exploited to the full by providing it with a light source adequate for throwing on the screen a picture visible to at least 1,500 persons at once.

An American Experiment

By DAVID WELSH

FEW SCIENTIFIC investigations have been made into the comparative merits of the various forms of visual aid media at present available to school-teachers. Any experimentation undertaken has been restricted in scope and the data available have frequently been open to serious questioning. In most cases where doubt has occurred, controversies have arisen in which neither side has any scientific backing. Expressions of opinion, assertions and counter-assertions have been, and continue to be made, without in any way solving the various problems

confronting those interested in visual education.

Dr. Goodman's study* is doubly welcome. It supplies concrete evidence, based on a coldly scientific experiment, as to the comparative effectiveness of four visual-aid media and, at the same time, acts as a stimulus to further research.

The study in question was undertaken in New York in 1942 as part of

*Comparative Effectiveness of Pictorial Teaching Materials. David J. Goodman, Ph.D. Centre for Safety Education, New York University. Price 35 cents.

a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The subject was sponsored by a University committee and may, on that account, be freed from any doubts as to its disinterestedness.

The problem was to assess the comparative effectiveness of four visual-aids in teaching a number of safety subjects to schoolchildren of 11-12 years (6th Grade). The four aids chosen were (a) the sound film, (b) the silent film, (c) the silent film strip or film slide, (d) the sound film strip or film slide. The four safety topics were (1) fire safety, (2) automobile safety, (3) pedestrian safety, and (4) bicycle safety. Of the four aids chosen, all are familiar to teachers in this country with the exception of the sound film-strip. This is a comparatively recent innovation in the U.S.A. and has, so far, penetrated to this country only in the form of demonstration models.

Comparable Media

Four sound films suitable for the age-group in question were at hand from various sources, each one dealing with one of the topics mentioned. A silent version of each film was also available. Thus it remained for the investigator to prepare from these his sound and silent film strips. Each of the different media—sound film, silent film and both strips—consequently contained the same photographic and textual data, an essential for obtaining validity in the results. An impartial committee next evaluated all the visual material and any suggestions made were incorporated before the tests were formulated.

Thus, for each topic, four lessons were prepared—one utilising the sound film, one the silent film, one the sound film strip and one the silent film strip.

A test paper of the multiple-choice type was constructed for each subject, the 35 questions in each being carefully worded to suit the 11-12 age group. No matter what medium was

used with a class, all questions were capable of solution from the visual and auditory matter contained in it. Two different forms of each test were prepared: Form "A" for use in the pre-test part of the experiment and Form "B" for use in the Immediate Recall and also Delayed Recall (30 days) parts. Both forms contained precisely the same 35 questions, the only differences being in the order of the questions and in the position of the words in the choice. Hence, it was possible to assess each pupil's prior knowledge of the topic from Form "A" and, after presentation of the lesson and completion of Form "B", to assess the increase in information.

By the "rotation-group" technique of research such variable factors as age, I.Q., number of pupils, are eliminated and so this method was used. If an individual class is taken as an example, its timetable during the four days of the test would be:

	Subject	Medium
First Day	Fire Safety	Sound Film
Second ,,	Automobile ,,	Silent ,,
Third ,,	Pedestrian ,,	Sound Film Strip
Fourth ,,	Bicycle ,,	Silent Film Strip

A brief glance will indicate that each class saw each subject and each medium once only. A further source of error was eliminated in that Dr. Goodman himself conducted all the lessons in the experiment, no variation in presentation being in this way possible.

Conclusions

From the statistical information gained, Dr. Goodman drew the following general conclusions:

1. All the visual aids concerned in the test were of material value in the learning process.
2. The Silent Film was the most

effective with the age-groups studied.

3. The Sound Film was the least effective.

4. The sound and silent film-strips were a close second to the silent film and superior to the sound film.

In addition to the above general conclusions, some curious results became available when selected intelligence groups were chosen for separate analysis. With high I.Q. groups, the silent film-strip came out on top for both Immediate and Delayed Recall tests, the sound film again taking fourth place. For low I.Q. groups, the Immediate Recall results were similar to those of the general findings, but in the Delayed Recall the sound film-strip came out on top, the silent film

second, the sound film third and the silent film-strip last.

As Dr. Goodman quite rightly points out, all the forms of pictorial illustration showed positive gains, yet, on the basis of the results, it would appear that the value of the sound film and of the film-strip in the educational field has been incorrectly assessed. The sound film, seemingly, has received undue emphasis while the film strip has been underestimated by educationists. Possibly the most important results of the experiment, however, is the complete justification of the silent film as opposed to the sound film for the age-group tested. This conclusion should give food for thought to some sections of the educational-film world.

BENGAL STUDIO

By Sydney Moorhouse

WITHIN A few miles of the heart of the populous city of Calcutta the Indian world of make-believe is carried out in a setting of dazzling arclight and painted scenery. There, among a series of tree-bordered lanes—lanes which, somehow, never fail to remind me of the home counties—is the centre of the Bengal film industry, and its claim to be the Hollywood of Eastern India is emphasised by the fact that one group of studios bears the title of "Tollywood".

There are few Indian industries that have made greater progress in the past decade than that of film producing and even to-day it gives employment to hundreds of people. Bombay, Madras, Bangalore and Mysore, as well as Calcutta, are all important centres of the film industry, and in normal times no less than 77,000,000 feet of films are produced annually from the Indian

studios. This huge total far exceeds that of Britain and, indeed, ranks second only to that of the United States of America.

It must, of course, be realised that the average Indian film is much longer than those made in Britain or America, 14,000 to 15,000 feet being the normal length. Now the film rationing schemes impose a maximum length of 11,000 feet and it is rarely that an Indian film producer cuts down to anything less than this.

The story of the Indian film does not extend any further than the advent of the talking picture, for there is no doubt that the superseding of the written by the spoken word was responsible for creating the cinema show as a popular Indian entertainment, a fact which is readily appreciated when it is realised that quite a large proportion of the Indian film-going com-

munity are unable to read. A certain proportion of the films have Hindi as the language used, but the majority are made in the tongue of the particular province of their production—Bengali films are made at Tollygunge, Tamil at Madras, and so forth.

The fact that Indian film-making is a comparatively recent innovation has its influence on the character of the films made. Legends and mythology are firm favourites and to-day the film-goers of India can see the stories behind some of the great epic poems (in which this country is so very rich) depicted in such a way as to make their beauty understood and appreciated by all. National songs and lyrics, the works of such poets as Dr. Tagore and others of equal fame, are often incorporated, although recently there has been a tendency to compose special songs for the films and in Bengal Sailan Roy shows signs of being specially adept at this form of composition.

Stars Salaries

At the present time there are four different studios working at Tollygunge and each one has its own "star" actors and actresses who play the leads in the different productions. Kanan Devi (who appeared in the English production of *Jala Jug* and brought her Bengali art to the notice of thousands of British screen enthusiasts) is usually cast for principal parts at the Kali Films studios; Chandrabati and Saigol have like roles at the New Theatres, and Sailen Chowduray and Jahan Ganguli are the stars in the films coming from Tollywood. A Bengal film star received between Rs5,000 and 6,000 a month (£375-£400 in English currency), in addition to receiving a percentage of the takings of the films they make.

In order to complete the casts, daily "extras" are engaged and during my tour of the Bengal filmland I met several girls and men who divide their

time between the different film-producing companies. For this type of work pay varies from Rs2 to Rs5 (three shillings to seven-and-sixpence) a day in the case of men and Rs5 to Rs10 for girls—a striking tribute to the popularity of girls in the Indian films.

Studio conditions, of course, vary a great deal. Some of the films are made in large, roomy buildings which can compare with the English studios so far as lighting arrangements, technical equipment, and settings are concerned; but others are produced in what are little more than large scale models of the bamboo "basha" with which the serviceman stationed in India is so familiar. Yet even in the latter, modern cameras and lighting yield excellent results.

Bengali Ingenuity

I was impressed by the ingenuity of the property designers at this Bengali home of filmland. At Hollywood and Elstree, where money is of little object, the making of the sets furnishes little difficulty, but Indian producers are nothing like so wealthy and everything has to be made with an eye focussed upon production costs. Don't mistake me here. I saw nothing cheap or tawdry at the Bengal studios, but at the same time there was no evidence of extravagance.

Papier mache is the chief substance used in constructing the sets, and I was amazed at the very realistic results that can be obtained by the judicious use of this. At one place my guide picked up a cumbersome-looking metal chain under whose yoke some unhappy villain had just been groaning. He threw it across the floor to me and, fearing that I should look an utter ass if I dropped it, I made a very determined effort to catch it. The look of surprise on my face as I did so amused the whole company! This fearful-looking object was made entirely of paper and weighed but an ounce or two.

In another studio I found an ornate

Maharajah's palace and was taken into the glittering room used for conferences among the princes and other high officials. Jewel-studded thrones and beautifully-cushioned seats made the place one of glittering splendour. Yet coloured glass and cotton and plywood had been the only articles used in its construction.

I came away from Bengal's "Hollywood" convinced that the Indian film industry has a great future ahead of it.

Still in its infancy and with the war interfering with its progress in the adolescence stage, it contains those elements of vitality and enterprise which augur well for the years to come. The producers are alive to the part the film is destined to play in the cultural life of the nation, and there is no doubt that the cinema will play an integral part in bringing Indian folklore, tradition and art to the notice of an even wider public in post-war years.

THE MOVIE WRITER

By Thomas Quinn Curtiss

WRITING FOR the movies appears to have become an industry in itself and being an accepted and standard movie author is almost as lucrative a profession as being a manufacturer of Spam during a World War. Just who these affluent gentlemen—the Hollywood Hugos and cinema Zolas—are is always something of a mystery for aside from the momentary and lightning-like flashes of screen credits one never encounters their names and they are for the most part innocent of any other literary endeavours. Yet it is they who compose nearly all of the scenes and dialogue we see and listen to at the films these days and their work bears an unmistakable and familiar uniformity. That no important or even heard-of writer has ever managed to turn out an adequate scenario leads one to suspect that there is some hidden art in the trade. This task is always handed over to a semi-anonymous and apparently semi-literate group of underlings, the members of which collect the ancient cliches at exorbitant fees. To begin with, the whole business of writing a movie is as remote from writing a novel or a play as it is from the poetry of John Donne and it is extremely

difficult to imagine any writer—even a very bad writer—setting out on a career of letters deliberately choosing to write for the screen. An iron and exhausting style must be mastered and every idea and conflict must be measured for expression in terms of close-ups, cutting, etc. Judging solely from the finished product there can be little doubt that when it comes to writing screen plays Herman J. Mankiewicz and Robert Riskin are better writers than Aldous Huxley and H. G. Wells.

The "writers" on the studio payrolls may be at once divided into two categories. In the first are the "name" writers. They have usually attained some rank and renown and are lured to the Gold Coast by tales of its fabulous riches. They rarely write anything once in Hollywood and anything they do write is highly suspect and is either completely re-written or thrown in the nearest waste-paper basket. Their names, however, are put to use for advertising purposes. The second group is formed of non-writers who do the greater part of the writing, re-writing and additional dialogue writing. Some of these men are tin-pot playwrights and hack novelists who, having failed in higher

fields, have dropped a level, but some, I am told, have never done anything but write films.

That both these groups are wholly superfluous must be obvious to anyone who has ever given the matter a moment's thought. It requires a considerable stretching of the imagination to picture the average movie-going moron being roped in to see a film he otherwise would not see because Theodore Dreiser or Somerset Maugham wrote the story. As for the function of group-two it is likewise entirely unnecessary. For when all the writing, re-writing and other non-sensical scribbling that goes on has been completed the director takes over and tells the story on the screen in his own way often discarding the script in toto. The best directors have written their own scenarios to start with. D. W. Griffith wrote his and so did Eisenstein. So did, and do, Charlie Chaplin, Von Stroheim, Dovkenko, Robert Flaherty, Pare Lorentz, Preston Sturges, Rene Clair, Orson Wells and Billy Wilder. That such a solution is not ideal is readily admitted but it is the best one that the cinema has yet come across.

Ridiculous Blunders

The main fault here lies in the unfortunate fact that the movie director while concentrating on one sequence usually forgets what has preceded it and what is to follow. Thus even the best films are marred grotesquely by the most ridiculous blunders. In Dupont's celebrated *Vaudeville* we are shown a trio of acrobats getting so drunk that they would be unable to stand up for a week. Yet next day they perform on a flying trapeze with great ease, the previous night's boozing a thing of the past. In Von Stroheim's famous *Wedding March* an Austrian cavalry officer, who has spent all his evenings carousing in bordellos, cries bitter

tears on his wedding day because he cannot marry a little heurige waitress he has seduced. In Eisenstein's epic *Ten Days That Shook the World* the black-and-white contrasting of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks is carried to absurdity and in Ford's well-known *Informer* a Dublin street-walker wears silk stockings.

Two Topnotchers

In all the years I have been going to the movies I can remember just two scenarists of any consequence. One was the female author (her name escapes me) of most of Fritz Lang's German flickers (*Metropolis*, *The Spy*, "M" et al.) and the other was a Hollywoodite, John Monk Saunders. This Saunders had been a flyer in the first World War and had a score of tales to tell. For better or for worse, he was utterly devoid of any literary powers whatsoever and quite naturally took to writing for the pulp magazines and the movies. At this he did remarkably well, but it was not his financial success—there have been greater ones in the same field—that impressed me. Rather he seemed to be trying desperately to tell the story of the War in cinematic values. He stumbled badly when his great chance came and his screen play for *Wings* was a mere imitation of Laurence Stallings's *Big Parade*, itself an imitation. But in *The Dawn Patrol*—at least in the version directed by Ford in 1930—he came very near hitting it off as the Hollywood Hemingway. He wrote other films—one, I believe, called *Legion of the Condemned*—and all of them held one's interest and attention more than most movies do. But the Hollywood happiness boys, with their happy-endings and happy-beginnings, had their feet in the door once again and Saunders and his attempts to recapture the fate of the war-time flyer on the screen were consigned to the limbo of forgotten things.

Keith Bean writes :

MY DEAR O.B.,

The beginning of 1945 and the beginning of the English run of the most boosted film in 1944, *Wilson*. . . . Together they create the impulse to wonder what this year will bring forth. One wonders—not hopefully—whether 1945 will come near to the achievement of 1944.

A Good Year

What a magnificent twelvemonth this last has been—not for the general level of its total output, which was indeed fairly low, but for the peaks which its best films reached. Together they have lessons to teach; but let us chronicle them first for they will rank enduringly as high points in cinematic art.

First of all and supremely in a class by itself, of course, is Olivier's *Henry V*. Consciously—and who shall quarrel with that?—it proves that the greatest dramatist of modern English is the greatest dramatist of modern English. But it proves much more than that. It exploits, to defy them, the limitations of the stage—and not particularly the Elizabethan stage. In peopling out the pageantry and giving it multitudinous movement, it presents this spectacular drama as Shakespeare conceived it but could not present it. Herein it demonstrates magnificently the authentic derivation of the cinema from earlier dramatic forms; and provides an abiding answer to those still unconvinced of the artistic mission and potentialities of the film.

More particularly, this Olivier masterpiece has a message for the obdurate and unconverted theatrophil. Because it neither emasculates the original emotions nor monkeys with the magical Shakespearean music, it destroys at one blow the ill-informed contention that cinema can be but a shallow imitation of its elder-sister

art, the stage (a contention, of course, which is shallowness itself). Certainly this *Henry V* was written first for the stage, and certainly these actors were nurtured in the theatre. But this 1944 piece goes so far beyond the thing which Shakespeare fathered that, without sacrificing anything of the old qualities, it becomes a new work. No pale apologetic emulator of an elder brother, this, but powerful and proud in its individual strength.

And, since we are discussing the basic virtues of the screen and the great service which this Olivier film has rendered them, let us note that here is dramatic literature of high excellence translated with high technical competence to a medium which can reach the million—on whom the health and progress and indeed the survival of art ultimately depend.

The Semifactuals

But there were other films in 1944 which deserve to be recorded. Excellent filmcraft was *The Way Ahead*, a realistic approach to heroism told with sheer efficiency that it is hard to fault. Employing the same semi-factual approach, *Western Approaches* and *San Demetrio, London* also went into the first flight.

Paradoxically, however, the very merits of these three works were cause for regret, for they served to emphasise the opportunities Britain has missed. They were all three British and *Western Approaches* came from the official Crown Film Unit. All three employed a documentary technique. But where were the factual recordings of this historically important year? Yes, we had the news reels and sometimes a whole news reel devoted to one subject. But a vaultful of news reels ranks as a chronicle on a par with a back file of a newspaper—chaotic, unco-ordinated, lacking the

larger perspective, and difficult or inaccessible alike to understanding and to search. Moreover, there is the nationalistic or patriotic aspect. One cannot separate in watertight compartments British culture and British power and British prosperity. They are all part of the health of the nation and they march together. Further, in the internationally competitive world in which we live, they march hand in hand with proselytising, which is now called propaganda.

British Propaganda Poor

If, in the artistic sense, British film succeeded mightily in 1944 it failed miserably in this historical and propaganda sense. After *Desert Victory* had shown how, we might have expected a whole series of similar films, depicting, interpreting and appraising the epic efforts of British fighting services. We had *Left of the Line*, telling with competence and clarity the great work of British troops at Caen, probably the biggest single factor in the break-out from Normandy. And we had, six months after the event, the story of the liberation of Rome and the fighting which led up to it. That was virtually all—and the Rome story had been dwarfed to almost academic interest by the march of mighty events during the long delay in showing it.

The indictment of this puny output is the list of possible subjects. Was there not Walcheren? Was there not Arnhem? Was there not the flooding rush of Montgomery's men from Normandy to Holland and Germany—the greatest feat in mobility in any theatre, any war? Was there not, is there not the terrific struggle against the jungle and the Japanese in Burma? These—and they do not exhaust the list—were British feats, meet for British-made films. And they were shot; the material is there. Perhaps it is not too late and, even, not too much to hope that we may see some-

thing of all this in 1945—all this or the comparable events which will make history this year. . . .

It can be done and the results, while presenting a national interpretation of events, can secure international screening. The March of Time series—notably the issues on North Africa, Burma, the Pacific—proves that. And if, out of the chaos and tumult of their own liberation, the French can produce their eloquent *Journal of Resistance*, the organisational problems should not be insuperable for the English.

American Good

But apart from these current works, which admittedly may be subject to a restrictive outlook on the governmental or departmental level on needs and possibilities, England can do more to tell its story to the world. *Wilson* moves one again to the thought that the Americans use the world screen much more effectively than we do in the furtherance, internationally, of their national outlook. This massive, conscientious but prosaic work is definitely a medium for interpreting—"romanticising" or "white-washing" would be too harsh terms perhaps—American participation in world events in the decade with which it deals. It was like that too in *Mission to Moscow*. There is no comparison between such positive, punching works and Coward's technically imaginative but historically sentimentalised *This Happy Breed*. The affirmation of the British view in world affairs is surely an inspiring subject for British producers.

Again the Americans have proved it: It can be done and the results, while presenting a national interpretation, can secure international screening. Again, the material is there for the fearless film-maker.

* * *

After all, O.B., the assessment of the lessons has displaced the chronicling of the examples.

Let us at least record the titles of some of the films which made the high lights of the film year. Hollywood's best contribution was with thrillers. *Double Indemnity* will remain a classic, streamlined in every department, a masterly piece of story-telling. *Laura* ranked nearly as high, and for the same qualities.

In comedy, Preston Sturges did not fail us. We hail his *Hail the Conquering Hero* alike for its lively filmcraft and its impish satire.

There were some individual performances, too, worth remembering. Spencer Tracy in *The Seventh Cross* and Greer Garson's romantic *Madame Curie* were two; also, for sustained and conscientious work, Bette Davies's role in *Old Acquaintance* and Alexander Knox's *Wilson*.

And finally we can be grateful for three films made before 1944 but only shown to us then: *The Forgotten Village*, *Le Jour Se Lève* and *L'Homme qui Cherche la Vérité*.

CONCERNING COLOUR

Basil W. Harley

THE FURTHER development of the established principles of view selection and breakdown of sequences into shots points the way to a more creative use of colour in the cinema.

Pudovkin, in *Film Technique* has defined these principles, pointing out the difference between reality and the two-dimensional reproduction of it on the screen and stressing the camera's powers of giving a clear and vivid representation of detail. . . . "The power of filmic representation lies in the fact that, by means of the camera, it continually strives to penetrate as deeply as possible to the mid-point of every image."

This is the whole basis of film art as distinct from merely photographing a scene from one fixed camera set-up. The more complex the scene the more shots it must be broken down to in order to portray it satisfactorily. That is, to allow the audience to "intensify its examination". The complexity of a film sequence depends upon many factors—its length, subject matter, and to a very great extent whether photographed in colour or black and white. The circumstance of photographing a scene in colour greatly complicates the images produced, a fact that has not previously received much atten-

tion. The effect of this complication is to slow down the tempo while the colours are appreciated by the audience. This can be seen in colour films with natural settings and human figures. If the tempo of the film is not retarded by the director an effect of confusion is apparent, unless the individual shots are specially "colour selected". In the cartoon film the subject itself is simplified; clear, bold outlines with plain colour masses filling them. This slowing down of tempo tends to a reversion to the early, slow photographed dramas. The full stereoscopic colour film would present this problem in its most acute form.

It seems reasonable then that this complexity of colour should be treated by the director in a manner similar to the established method of dealing with complexity of form. That is, by including in each shot only that form and that colour most appropriate to the development of the sequence and the film as a whole.

The camera is taken close to an object in order to put outside the frame all irrelevant matter. In a colour film the isolated object is often of varied hues. Thus the simple picture that results when photographed in

black and white becomes a complex shot in colour. This has to be held on the screen longer, causing the slowing down of tempo mentioned. The one shot no longer suffices and it must again be broken down into others, each one emphasising just the most significant colour required. This further breakdown means virtually that the screen is dominated by one main colour only for each shot.

Colour and Emotion

Now this in turn opens up a whole range of true "colour-montage" so that the director can, by so choosing his main shot colours, build up his emotional effects by his colours in conjunction with his forms. Either the colour "flow" from shot to shot can be continuous and develop smoothly or each shot or series of shots can be in contrast with others or, again, in various harmonious or contrasting relationships with each other. These will depend upon the emotional responses required to the sequence. Eisenstein, in his chapter on Colour and Meaning in *The Film Sense* gives many examples of the dual significance that has by tradition been attached to the colour yellow. So, whilst there are no accepted standards for these responses to various colours, within the framework of one film the director can establish his own colour motifs.

In practice it is found that the dynamic composition of the individual shot is of the greatest importance. The presence of a large static mass of bright colour, for instance, detracts even from action within the shot. A composition that would be satisfactory in monochrome could be hopeless in colour because of such bright areas. The cartoonists, who are fortunate in having complete control over their material, usually arrange for the person or objects in action to be lighter in tone than their backgrounds.

All this has only dealt with the objective aspects of colour. However,

in a rather narrower field the subjective has its place. It is seldom used in normal direct photography possibly because the average audience would not understand it, anyway not without gentle preparation. The following example will indicate one possibility in this direction:

An Example

The man is going to meet the girl. It is a most important and long awaited meeting. He knows that she will be wearing a blue dress. In mid-shot he leaves the bus and stands waiting outside some shops. He anxiously scrutinises the crowd of passers-by. Gradually all colours fade and he is watching the crowds in flat monochrome. He (in colour) looks at his watch—turns idly to glance in the nearest window—gives a slight start as he sees a model in a blue frock. He turns again and dully surveys the still colourless crowds. Suddenly in mid-shot two darkly dressed people with backs to the camera separate, revealing the girl smiling and advancing towards the camera until the whole screen is flooded with the blue of her dress. Camera angle is changed and it is tracked back to reveal the man and the girl talking, etc., etc.

Here it is forced upon the audience that the man is conscious only of the colour blue, and the advancing and receding blue colour puts the final emphasis on it.

In conclusion, it does seem that experiment along lines such as these would be valuable. Major Klein has stated that the "first colour film to be received with universal acclamation will be that one in which we shall never have been conscious of colour as an achievement". As a technical achievement yes, but surely we should be conscious of colour as an artistic achievement, used to evoke a fuller and deeper audience response to the film.

Please Try! Herman G. Weinberg

writes two letters

NUMBER ONE

A NEW picture was being previewed in a Hollywood projection room. It had scarcely begun, the credit titles were still on the screen, when Groucho Marx is reputed to have said to Harpo, sitting next to him, "It drags, doesn't it?"

I like this anecdote, apocryphal or not, because it is a symptom of the greatest enemy that art has—*ennui*. Films done with relish are invariably good films. Their enthusiasm is infectious, their spontaneity is like the sudden appearance of an oasis in the desert. But so many films have carried the weight of *ennui* with them, like the weight a chambered nautilus carries on its back, that a pall of boredom begins to settle upon the sensitive spectator with the credit titles of each "new" picture. In short, going to the movies has ceased to be the adventure it once was. The charm of discovery, recognition and delight in the individuality of style, the surety that the new film by "X" would be an event, as "X's" previous film was an event—all this is gone. Some films are more amusing than others, some are less boring than others. Occasionally, we come upon an oasis in the desert, but the distances between oases are becoming greater and greater. . . .

Preston Sturges

One such oasis was the new Sturges film, *Hail the Conquering Hero*, which, though it lacked the ferocious joy and felicitous spontaneity of *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek*, again contributed an authentic piece of Americana to the literature of the screen. It is said that Eddie Bracken, the star of both of those films, bows in the direction of

Hollywood every morning, from wherever in the country he happens to be, because Hollywood is where Preston Sturges is. Bracken enters Sturges' office only after removing his shoes, as a Moslem enters a mosque, for Sturges' sanctuary is to him "the holy of holies". And well might he for Sturges has served him mightily, and, *vice versa*. Things have come to such a pass that only the new Sturges films are worth looking forward to. Anyone else's good film turns out to be a surprise.

One such surprise was *Double Indemnity* by Billy Wilder, director of the somnambulistic *Five Graces to Cairo*. Like *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, James Cain's earlier study in a *crime passionel*, *Double Indemnity* is cold, raw and brutal, but unlike *Variety*, it lacks pity—it is not related to the everyday world, its characterisations are too sketchy, and we don't believe in it. Though it lacks earthiness, it at least tries to be honest, which is a great deal always in the cinema. It is with keen anticipation that one awaits Dudley Murphy's filming of Cain's third study in crime and passion, *Serenade*, which the erstwhile collaborator of Fernand Leger will film in Mexico. In a previous *American Letter* I advocated the filming of this taut and swiftly moving story as providing ideal film material.

And *Kismet*

Though *Kismet* is set in the Bagdad of the caliphs, it is, unhappily, no oasis. For its sumptuous technicolor and settings it is, perhaps, worth seeing as a pleasant spectacle for the eye, and Marlene Dietrich, caparisoned in the deathless phrase of Mencken like "the

concubine of an Arabian horse thief", is always worth seeing (since a beautiful woman who looks intelligent is such a *rara avis* on the screen). But the whole philosophical basis of *Kismet* has been ignored in this glittering new version which renders its title meaningless to those who even stop to think about it. And, after the charming fantasy of the Arabian Nights sequence of *The Wax Works*, of *Secrets of the Orient* and *The Thief of Bagdad* (not to mention the earlier silent version with Otis Skinner), it fails utterly as a recapturing of the magical and extravagant spirit of the Thousand and One Nights. The musical score, alone, of Pabst's *Atlantide* (by Wolfgang Zeller) had more of the colour of the orient than all of *Kismet*'s technicolor.

Foreign Revivals

Typically, the war documentaries provide the most drama among current films, as well as the best technique, *Attack* and *Battle of the Marianas* being two cases in point. A new Swedish film, *Himlaspelet*, has considerable charm and occasionally evokes memories of the "golden age" of Sjöstrom, Christianson and Stiller. I found it interesting to compare two old films that I saw again recently—*Le Rosier de Mme. Husson* and *The Blue Angel*. Both stand the test of time surprisingly well, the former even more so than the latter. But how gay and poetic the French film is in its approach to sex, and how sombre and crepuscular is the German approach to it. Between these two extremes, I would place the erotic moments in the Czech Machaty's early *Erotikon*, which achieved a degree of poignancy never again equalled, not even by Machaty in *Extase*. No, a Frenchman could never have written the line Maugham once wrote, "Desire is sad."

As for the rest, it belongs to the future: Cantinflas' first American film

(but will the Hays office allow his "waist-line" to be where it was in his Mexican films?); Sturges' forthcoming *The Great Moment*, a comedy built around the discovery of anaesthesia, if you can imagine such a thing; Vidor's epic *An American Romance*: *The Great Flammariion*, with Erich von Stroheim; the new Fritz Lang, *Woman at the Window*; Nebenzahl's remake of *Mayerling* and forthcoming *Summer Storm*, after Chekov; Lubitsch's *Czarina* (remember *Forbidden Paradise*?); and, of course, the new Disney, *The Three Caballeros*. *Saludos Amigos* and *Fantasia* are being re-recorded in German, to show in occupied German territory. Perhaps the innocence of these two films will prove a spiritually cleansing force for the *cretin* of that benighted land. But the legacy of the children of Europe, those who have survived the carnage, should be all the Disney films, *Pinocchio*, *Bambi*, *Dumbo*, *Snow White*, etc.—to make them smile again, to show them that their elders have not forgotten them, that there is still love and affection in the world, that the awful nightmare is over. Europe could do with a good dose of the tonic laughter of children for the future well-being of the race, since so many of her adults seem to have gone out of their minds. Let the rear-guard of the advancing armies of liberation bring portable cinemas into the smouldering villages and towns and gather the children about them, yes, even the German children, and show them the bright world of Disney as an affirmation of faith in life—and even the birds will come back over Europe again as her blackened communities resound once more to the happiest sound in the world . . . the laughter of children.

October 1944

NUMBER TWO

AND SO we pass to yet another quarter's films in a world at war. . . .

It is almost as if we were not at war,

as far as Hollywood is concerned, or as if that war were some sort of Spanish-American War of '98 affair, for all the passion that has been aroused on the screen here—with the inevitable exception of occasional government documentaries, edited by the studios from material shot on the various fronts. Only in the news reels do we see glimpses of what is happening (and even then, heavily censored, as no doubt they must be). We have had nothing from Capra, Litvak, John Huston or John Ford in months—though some of the best early films of the war came from them. To be sure, we have seen *The Rainbow*, but that was a Soviet film. Produced at white heat, it is, perhaps, the most violently anti-Nazi film thus far produced by any one, as we would imagine a Soviet film on that subject would be. But let the bars down and ask the French or Belgians, Italians or Greeks, or the Dutch or Poles, or the Norwegians or Czechs, to do a film on the subject of the Nazis and I am sure you could duplicate the *saeva indignatio* of *The Rainbow* a dozen times. Whatever metaphorical "bars" I mean—let them down for Hollywood, too, and ask it to do a film on the subject of Nazis.

Anti-Nazi Feelings

How deeply can one feel another's pain? That the Nazi-enslaved nations could produce violent anti-Nazi films goes without saying. But a country which has not felt the yoke of that kind of annihilating oppression—could it produce such a film, even if it is officially at war with the same oppressor? And what about neutral countries? Could Sweden? Could (or would) Argentine? Portugal or Spain (ha!)? Switzerland or Turkey? Could Hollywood? Hollywood did once—but that was in the years after the last war, when the general sentiment had turned anti-war. *The Big Parade*, *What Price Glory*, *Journey's End*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Road*

Back—all very good films, indeed (save, perhaps, *What Price Glory*, which was far better as a play than a film). But these were a post-war reaction . . . in the "safe" years of peace.

Before the human race can claim that it is worth saving (or that its civilisation is worth saving), it must realise that it is not enough to get angry when someone steps on your toes—one must also get angry when someone else's toes are stepped upon.

I suppose it is a matter of whose ox is being gored. Neutral countries certainly aren't going to "invite trouble" by making anti-Nazi films (or anti-anybody films). And Hollywood would rather make *Stage Door Canteen* films as an outlet for its narcissism, showing how democratic it is to "our boys".

"You look like Joan Crawford" says one soldier, dancing with a girl in *Hollywood Canteen*.

"Sh-h-h, don't look now," she smiles coyly, "but I am Joan Crawford."

Everybody in the audience knows she's Joan Crawford—whose risibilities was supposed to be tickled by that one? Hollywood's own, I'm afraid, and no one else's. That kind of snobism in 1944—that kind of "democratic" camaraderie . . . fiddlededee!

Poor Stuff

To Have and Have Not, from Hemingway's novel, changes the locale from Cuba to Martinique under Vichy to drag in the war (more likely to make it "timely"). The whole to-do about this film seems to have centred around the debut of Lauren Bacall, a dour-faced vixen whom the critical boys have confused with Dietrich, the Empress Poppea and certain of their more esoteric dreams. A more embarrassing portrayal of a *femme fatale* I have ever seen. Equally embarrassing was the condescension with which that excellent actor, Dalio, is tolerated (that's the only word

for it) in the cast. A player of exceeding warmth, subtlety and intelligence, it is shameful to see him treated like a stooge in a role any dolt could have played. But he's a poor French refugee, here, and I suppose he's more than glad to get the part, etc.—that's the attitude. And asking an audience to laugh for two hours at the *delirium tremens* of a man suffering from alcoholism is a grisly thing. But the audience laughs. Like *Casablanca*, which it sets out to duplicate to the last desperate display of manliness by Humphrey Bogart, it will, no doubt, earn a fortune.

A Valiant Try

An American Romance, however, will earn no fortune. M.G.M. has practically "written it off" as one of those artistic attempts that, perhaps, never should have been started in the first place. King Vidor has announced that the studio cut many of the film's most trenchant scenes (capital *v.* labour, trade union discussions, etc.). Originally the film was to have been called simply *America*. Adding the "romance" gives you an idea what M.G.M. was afraid of. But maybe they're right—maybe Americans *wouldn't* go to see a film called *America*. That's too obvious. It isn't enough. What's left of it is a simplification of what goes on to make a man's life. Still it was a valiant try.

None But The Lonely Heart is not only a valiant try but a successful one. From Richard Lewellyn's novel of London slum-life, and the first directorial effort of Clifford Odets, it is as mature a film as we have had in a long time and easily the best American film since Orson Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Citizen Kane*. George Couloris and Ethel Barrymore are as right as right can be in it and so is June Duprez, but I thought Cary Grant was miscast as Ernie Mott. Batty Fitzgerald, of course, was a delight, as he always is. Odets is the

man to transfer Synge and O'Casey to the screen—although the Ford of *The Informer* is, too, but Ford, before he went to war, showed that he was no longer thinking in terms of O'Casey, if his *Tobacco Road* is any criterion. I was in that minority (if there were any others) who didn't think *Grapes of Wrath* compared with it.

Good Chekov

What does that leave us? *Summer Storm*, after Chekov's *The Shooting Party*, a display vehicle for Linda Darnell for whom I'm sure a twentieth century Trojan War could be fought all over again, and the prize worth it; a display vehicle for Edward Everett Horton as a decadent Russian aristocrat, if that's the way they were, and a most embarrassing display vehicle for the otherwise intelligent George Saunders. Hollywood's idea of Russians is really something to see.

And *Laura*—or *Life in the Upper Class Set*. A cultured, sensitive writer shoots a girl in the face at close range with a double-barrelled shot-gun. A policeman investigating the murder suddenly becomes romantic at a picture of the martyred *houri* and drinks himself into a stupor contemplating her face, in the picture, which he has just seen in actuality as the mess the shot-gun left it in. . . .

Frederic Prokosch, after seeing Hollywood's version of his book, *The Conspirators* (with Hedy Lamarr and Paul Henried, if you *must* know, dearies) stated in *The New Republic* that Hollywood is dying and that "the hope of future films lies in France or Russia or Zanzibar; certainly no longer in that California city of dreams." That film, he writes, has led him to speculate on the whole direction in which Hollywood is moving. "It reveals all the symptoms of an art which has become formalised out of all human recognition; crystallised, thoroughly corrupt and dying."

December, 1944

New Yorker Arthur Kleiner

writes about Film Scores

AS EARLY as 1908 Camille Saint-Saëns composed the first musical score for a short film (853 ft.) called *L'assassinat du Duc de Guise*. It was his *opus* 128 written for Strings, Piano and Harmonium, consisting of one Introduction and five Tableaux, with each part very carefully cued. The Scenario of the film was written by Henry Lavedan: it was produced by "Le Film d'Art". This first attempt at film scoring indicated how the operatic experience of a great composer could be skilfully adapted to this new form of Art.

The Cue Sheet

During 1909 the Edison Company began to supplement their films with suggestions for a musical background which carried such indications as "Pleasant, sad, lively or with dramatic strain". Gradually other companies introduced more specific details for a musical accompaniment and the musical Cue Sheet was born. Eight or sixteen measures only were usually given with this, to inform the pianist of its running time.

For many movie pianists these instructions were merely indications of the mood to be expressed, few of them bothering to endure the inconveniences entailed in studying new music or of purchasing thirty or more new numbers for each film. So they evolved the system of interchanging the numbers, of using music they already possessed or of simply making up their own improvisations.

Thus a new style of music emerged with great success the so-called Mood Music. Expressions varied from the naïvety of Child Love to the most impassioned Ecstasy, from fanciful comedy to the dramatic, mysterious atmospheric from the lurking villain

to the flirtatious vamp; but with "Heart and Flowers" always winning the "Oscar".

The First Original Score

In 1911 Walter Cleveland Simon composed an original score for *Arrah-Na-Plough*, while in 1914 Karl Breil arranged and composed the score for *The Birth of a Nation*, still the most famous of movie scores and wrongly considered by many as the first ever written. For this Breil used very little original music, employing rather sequences such as "In the Hall of the Mountain King" by Grieg for the great battle scene or Wagner's "Walkyre" for the Ku-Klux-Klan episode.

My impression has always been that this American epic might well have had a more creative score suitable to its own nature. Whenever I play this score it always recalls to mind Hugo Riesenfeld's Foreword to this *Beau Geste*, in which he said "The music has to be adapted to the action of the picture and the only way to get the full benefit out of this kind is to approach it with a certain sympathy and try to adapt your sense of tempo and rhythm to the action of the film".

It does not seem to be widely known that the Museum of Modern Art in New York City has for many years collected silent movie scores, cue sheets and all varieties of specially written music used in the silent decades of the movie pictures. Yet these are of particular interest to students of film music and to people desiring to know how movie scores have been written. Among these are interesting scores by Mortimer Wilson for Douglas Fairbanks films, Schostakovich's Music for *New Babylon* 1929, and Eric Satie's *Entr'acte* score. D. W. Griffith pictures nearly all

have original scores, while C. B. De Mille's *King of Kings*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Ben Hur* and Erno Rapee's score for the *Iron Horse* are all of special merit.

But the question can be raised as to whether there has been any actual development in the composing of

musical scores since Saint-Saëns. Even now our Hollywood composers are still arranging their scores in similar form with the same old Cue Sheet treatment of Mood Sequence. Nothing new apparently has been added, expression rarely gaining in subtlety and creativeness.

FILMS AND YOUTH CLUBS*

IN THE cinema there are "soft lights—and seats—and sweet music", the gentle hypnotism of warmth and of the flickering screen, films with sequences shot and re-shot, pieced together on the cutting table, reinforced by every trick and art known to Directors to drive home the one idea and obtain the one response. The audience and especially a young audience, is receptive, even vulnerable. Unthinkingly ideas and information—true and false—are absorbed, values are accepted and attitudes formed.

False Values

But the ideas and values so presented are not in general those which a wise, tolerant and civilised community would wish to place before its Youth. Film making is an industry, and a highly profitable one, and it is controlled by financiers not by thinkers, artists or scholars. The artists who work in this medium are limited by the policy and interests of those in control, and again by the difficulty in maintaining the artistic integrity and unity of their concepts through the complexity of translation on to celluloid—a translation in which hundreds of other workers will be concerned. In general the bigger the organisation the bigger the proportionate profits, and the greater the difficulties of the artist.

Such conditions do not favour vigorous experiment and progress, but rather the reproduction of the types which have proved to be "winners" and which appeal to the lowest common denominator of public taste. Films appealing to the more educated minority are not safe investments, all material inducements are on the side of mediocrity and facile escapism. It is encouraging to find that, despite all this, so many good films have been made, both in this country and in Hollywood, but especially in the U.S.S.R. and in France.

The one remedy within our grasp is to train young people in habits of vigorous, critical and independent thought, to turn a passive and receptive audience into an alert and critical one. It cannot be a quick or easy process, but if achieved, shoddy standards will be exposed, and, as better and better films become box-office successes, the general standard of production too will be raised, and we may expect a sharp spiral of improvement. At its best this examination of values in the cinema may well lead to a conscious review of the whole range of values, and to the recognition of hidden prejudices and unreasoned assumptions.

Using the Commercial Cinema

It is sound educational practice to start off from familiar experience, and in the Film Group, even when the Club has its own projector, it is wise

* This is an extract from a memorandum prepared by Miss Dorothy Grayson. Copies may be had from the British Film Institute so long as supplies last.

to start with the film as seen in the local cinema. Special shows are useful later, but even if these cannot be provided, a very great deal can be done by choosing a "film of the week", seeing it as a group if possible, and discussing it and its implications.

The Committee's Work

A Film Group Committee will be needed with the following duties, many of which can be made the responsibility of individual members:

1. To collect and file for future use reviews and even advertisements from National and local papers, weeklies and "fan" magazines. (Reviews Secretary.)

2. To obtain lists of future programmes from Local Cinema Managers. (Programmes Secretary.)

3. To choose a film for the coming week after considering the programmes and reviews. (Committee as a whole.)

4. To put up, a week in advance, a selection of reviews and advertisements, with remarks of special interest underlined, of the selected film for the coming week. The "fan" magazines usually provide attractive pictures and a really arresting display can be built up on a large sheet of coloured paper. (Publicity Secretary.)

5. To maintain a record of the films seen. (Records Secretary.)

This "Film Scrap Book" can be an exciting volume incorporating reviews and illustrations and a summary of each discussion.

Youngsters enjoy the "flicks" and quite naturally put up a resistance to any attempt to make them turn a relaxation into a toil, and they have a healthy objection to any too obvious "uplift". They are afraid too of "losing the magic in an examination of the mechanism". Few have developed criteria of judgment in any of the Arts, or any great sensitivity to aesthetic values.

All this is a consequence of the disturbing fact that, for so many youngsters, life is drab and prospects dull, and adventure and individual creativeness so much at a discount. Instinctively and pathetically they seek an escape into fantasy and shrink from clarity of thought and vision. We may deplore this attitude but it is impossible to condemn it in present circumstances, Fantasy is the child's antidote to frustration, and, when society does not provide sufficient scope and creative work for the ordinary individual, it remains a powerful factor long beyond adolescence.

We cannot, therefore, expect quick results because we shall be working against an unacknowledged defensive mechanism, against the crudity, ugliness, frustration and materialism in the environment of so many young people. To mitigate these ill-effects to make youngsters independent, strong and clear sighted is, of course, one of the ultimate aims of Youth work.

The Leader will be engaged in a slow educative process and will need to exercise considerable skill and patience. The thread to be followed throughout must be the interest and enjoyment of the young people. But although quick progress along a clear cut path cannot be expected, the Leader's own ideas of his aims and of possible lines of discussion must be clear.

Some Suggestions

In the following paragraphs some tentative suggestions of lines along which interest may be expected to develop are indicated, but each Leader will wish to formulate his own aims and evolve his own methods of approach.

We hope to build up a critical awareness of the cinema's subtle and pervasive influence on standards and taste, of its social effects and potential educational value. We want to remove

the dangerously passive vulnerability of the average cinema audience, and, in doing so, to make people aware of other values and standards, and of the whole impact of the environment, of the books they choose to read, of magazines, newspapers, advertisements, radio; as well as of the cinema, in conditioning their opinions and standards.

Two main lines of discussion can usually be provoked, the one concerning the content of the film and the other relating to the use of the resources of the film's medium. Although the distinction is to some extent artificial it will be found that the former will often involve social and ethical values, while the latter is concerned with techniques and aesthetic values—the subject matter usually considered under the name "Film Appreciation". Obviously the lines to be followed must be largely determined by the film upon which discussion is based.

Examining the Content

An examination of content may lead to increased awareness of other ways of living, of conditions in other lands, of facts about the organisation of our civilisation, of social problems, of human motives good and bad, of "Secrets of Nature", and so on, and may provide excellent training in recognising bias and propaganda, in separating fact from opinion and implication, and emotionally presented implication from logical deduction.

An examination of the use of the medium involves a consideration of some criteria of aesthetic excellence, reveals devices by which potent reactions are induced, and provides an added interest which in itself mitigates against the passivity which we hope to remove. The forming of aesthetic standards will be a long process, but young people do become readily interested in finding out how effects are produced, in the work of different

technicians and actors, in finding out why a particular sequence is satisfying and how techniques have changed. But it is doubtful whether even in Schools Film Appreciation should become yet another set subject. The artist seeks and experiments to find the composition and sequence, the balance of visual and aural elements which will create his effects. The critic analyses productions and formulates his rules of good composition, etc., and the academically minded are tempted to make these criteria the basis of training in Film Appreciation. It is, however, very doubtful if this is sound practice with young people. The teacher or leader, it is true, needs this knowledge, and will in time find opportunities to pass it on, but it will probably be wise at first to make the unit for study a definite film which the youngsters have seen. When the criteria of good shot composition, of good sequence, of good transition from shot to shot have emerged it may be possible to base further investigation on these more abstract concepts.

The Best Approach

It will probably be found, particularly in working class districts that the approach through content is at first the more popular. It concerns matters which interest young people and does not delve so directly into the mechanism of the glamour which so many of them seek in the cinema.

Either approach, if successful, will lead to a desire to see some of the better productions—unusual feature films, good foreign films, documentaries, and films illustrating the history of the cinema and the changes in technique. This is the stage at which to use the 16-mm. projector in the Club, and, by affiliation with a local Film Society, to see such special programmes as these Societies are accustomed to put on.

Notes & News

British Film Institute

The Governors have sanctioned two courses in the present year. The first is to be held at Birmingham University in the last fortnight of July and is to be a severely practical course on the manipulation of visual apparatus. Though most of the places will be allocated to Local Education Authorities, some will be reserved for members of the British Film Institute and other interested persons.

The second will be held at Bangor in the last fortnight of August and will be concerned with Film Appreciation with special emphasis on the practical possibilities of developing the subject in schools and youth organisations. Again most of the places will be reserved for nominees of Local Authorities and Youth Organisations but some will be available to members of the British Film Institute and others interested.

The cost of both courses will be in the neighbourhood of 5½ guineas a week.

An informal meeting of representatives of a few Film Societies was held early in December in order to discuss matters of common interest. The representatives of the Scottish Federation of Film Societies put forward a suggestion that a comparable English body should be formed. Mr. Oliver Bell, on behalf of the British Film Institute, promised that the Governors should be consulted as to the possibility of summoning a fully representative meeting of all English and Welsh Film Societies. It was also suggested that the Institute should approach the Commissioners of Customs and Excise and discover if possible the basis on which decisions are taken as to whether or no a film is to be exempted from entertainment tax if shown by a properly constituted film society.

A further meeting summoned under the auspices of the British Film Institute was one of representatives of certain industrial organisations interested in the use of the film for training and welfare purposes. There is an evident interest in the subject in these circles but no definite steps have as yet been taken to crystallise opinion. Mr. Oliver Bell promised on the behalf of the Institute to consult his Governing Body as to the possibility of the Institute forming an Industrial committee to prepare a report on the use of the film in industrial education.

The Governors have been asked to meet officials of the Board of Education to discuss the possible organisation to ensure the production and distribution of educa-

tional films when apparatus and film stock again became available. A report on the subject is in final draft.

Following on the Sheffield experiments in film appreciation in Youth Clubs, Miss Grayson, the travelling representative of the British Film Institute has prepared a special memorandum (of which parts are printed elsewhere in this issue) in order to give leaders direction and guidance.

The educational work of the Institute continues in undiminished strength. The Travelling Representative visits Training Colleges and other educational institutions and always receives a warm welcome. In addition it is pleasing to note that a number of professional teachers' organisations considered visual education at their annual meetings in January.

A new pamphlet on "School Design" has been published by the Institute (1s.). It enshrines a series of suggestions to ensure adequate facilities for the use of visual aids in schools. Perhaps its most novel suggestion is a new design of sliding blackboard enabling rear projection to be incorporated.

A new Monthly Film Bulletin Viewing Committee has started work. Its object is to appraise the value of Background Films.

National Film Library

A number of new films have been added to the Preservation Section of the National Film Library. These include such titles as *The Petrified Forest*, *Tunisian Victory*, *Kipps* and *The Tales of Manhattan*. Chemical and physical testing of the films in the preservation section continues as a routine matter. An indication of the technical work which is being done as well as of the other problems of the Library was given in a paper read to the British Kinematograph Society by Mr. Ernest Lindgren, the curator of the Library.

The borrowings of films from the Loan Section reached record levels in December. A number of new films have been duplicated and will shortly be included amongst those available for borrowing. They include some early dramas and "Carmen," a new Lottie Reiniger silhouette film. It should form an interesting comparison with the popular *Papageno*.

A suggestion that the activities of the Library should be expanded, is under consideration. It is felt that the opportunities before the Library are so great that efforts should be made to develop it as soon as the necessary funds can be ac-

quired, the sum involved being quite outside the range of the Sunday Cinematograph Fund from which hitherto the Library and the Institute have derived their income.

Merseyside Film Institute Society

Since last September the Annual Meeting has been held and Mr. W. Lyon Bleasie re-elected Chairman, Mr. A. E. Harrison Treasurer, and Messrs. T. F. Wilson and G. A. Batty Joint Honorary Secretaries. The Annual Report disclosed that by the end of last season the membership of the Society had doubled and stood at 880. Since then the membership has further increased and is now past the 1,000 mark.

The new season opened in light-hearted fashion with a showing of *Chaplin Festival* and *Welcome to Britain*. The next show was in November when the programme included the new Toscanini film with *Professor Mamlock* as the feature. In December Disney's *Fantasia* (coupled with a Fischinger and a George Pal cartoon) was so popular that it was necessary to give two performances. But the most successful show ever given by the Society was in January when *Un Carnet de Bal* supported by *Le Journal de la Resistance* played to three houses. Cavalcanti attended two performances and spoke to the audience on the French cinema during German occupation and compared the escapist nature of French films with the utilitarian product of British studios.

Forthcoming programmes include Du vivier's *The Heart of a Nation*, which is being shown in aid of the International Student Service, *Baltic Deputy* in February and *Strange Incident* in March.

Over 6,000 technical and secondary school children attended the Society's usual end of term shows at the Philharmonic Hall. Most of the shorts were from the Office of War Information and intended to introduce the children to the real America. Miss Ruth Berkey, a Pittsburgh School Teacher, serving in the American Red Cross, spoke to the children at each performance.

The assistance of the Society has been sought and given in connection with 16-mm. shows for the Red Cross, the Youth Organisations Committee, the Co-operative Ladies' Guild and the Parish Church. The latest series of films at the Parish Church is on the subject of Shipping.

The last, but most important item of news, is that the Society's monthly bulletin resumed publication in January.

ERRATUM

By error in our last issue we ascribed the production of *Men of Rochdale* to the Workers' Film Association. We are now informed by the Co-operative Wholesale Society that the film was produced by its own unit, the story being written by Reg. Groves. The film was directed by Compton Bennett and produced by G. D. Wynn and Sydney Fox.

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